

# **Developing the Perfect Pitch**

**Steve Carp - Pitching Drills**



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Turning pro is a mindset. If we are struggling with fear, self-sabotage, procrastination, self-doubt, etc. the problem is, we're thinking like amateurs. Amateurs don't show up. Amateurs crap out. Amateurs let adversity defeat them. The pro thinks differently. He shows up, he does his work, he keeps on truckin', no matter what.

*Steven Pressfield*

# Introduction: MY STORY

I thought the quote from author Stephen Pressfield would be a great way to start this off because it is so fitting. This from someone who took 17 years to complete his first novel and work a slew of minimum wage jobs only to end up divorced and homeless before becoming a household name in fiction, non-fiction and movies (The Legend of Bagger Vance).

More importantly, I wanted to emphasize how easy it is to quit and how hard it is to follow your dreams, especially in the face of adversity. I couldn't think of a better example than Mr. Pressfield — just think. No matter how hard you have it, no matter what you struggle with or what type of hardship you may face, you probably aren't divorced, homeless and penniless.

For Mr. Pressfield to press on (pun intended), what type of courage, discipline and mindset did it take?

Although my story isn't quite as colorful as Stephen Pressfield's, I have a similar, sort-of relevant story to hopefully inspire and motivate you to continue chasing your field of dreams and never give up, no matter how rough it gets.

Well, let me first point out the sole intention of this book's creation is to help you refine your skills as a baseball pitcher. My perfect pupil and/or reader is someone who comes to me with all the gumption to turn his run-of-the-mill arm into a well-oiled, precise, pitching machine. You should read the drills in this book and walk away with a clear understanding of perfecting each one.

My story starts off like this: well, let's start in the middle and flash backward and forward. I was a draft pick for

the New York Mets and ended up playing pro baseball for the New York Yankees. All the years spent practicing and running through the drills helped me pave my way to The Big Game, never once questioning the adolescent social life of socializing and dating I gave up. It was all worth it when I stepped on that Pitcher's mound.

## How I Got There

I graduated from Canarsie High School in 1970 and was first team All City-New York Daily News. I was then drafted in the 18th round of the 1970 Major League Baseball draft to the Mets. I was signed to a four year baseball scholarship by the University of Georgia and received Honors for First team All Academic S.E.C in 1974.

Noteworthy in college: I pitched a complete game and won at the University of Tennessee as a freshman and hit two consecutive home runs off former Big League Pitcher and current pitching coach Rick Honeycutt (Dodgers).

It was in June of 1974 when I was signed to the Kansas City Royals. I then played for the New York Yankee organization in 1975.

But fate has a way of delivering cruel blows when you're at the very place you want to be. Due to a shoulder injury I was forced to retire from the professional ranks. Devastated by this turn of events, I decided I could wallow in what might have been, or I could learn some new tricks.

After talking myself off the ledge, I rededicated myself to The Game and underwent physical therapy on my shoulder. During physical therapy I was able to improve my pitching mechanics and was able to compete at the professional level. Within four years I was pitching at AAA Columbus for the Yankee organization.

I was back in business. All in all, I had a 28 year career spent playing at the pro level and coaching others to go onto illustrious and lucrative careers. I played for Billy Goodman of the Kansas City Royals and Mike Ferraro, Leo Posada and Gene Michael of the New York Yankees. I pitched the 1977 season in Venezuela for Los Bravos De Anzoátegui in Porta La Cruz. While there, I pitched and won the championship game between Cumana and future Big League pitcher Albert Williams of the Minnesota Twins.

Some of my Major League Baseball students include: Mat Latos and Eli Villanueva of the Miami Marlins, and Anthony Rizzo of the Chicago Cubs, Luke Jackson -First Round draft pick of the Texas Rangers and Touki Toussaint the overall 16th pick of the Arizona Diamondbacks. Also noteworthy are Danny Core of the Toronto Blue Jays, VonDavid Sturtzbach of the California Angels and Scott Drucker of the Detroit Tigers. Recent draft picks include Preston Gainey of the Milwaukee Brewers, Richard Bleier and Dane Artman of the Milwaukee Brewers-4th round, Josh Pressley of the Tampa Bay Rays and Tony Davis of the Minnesota Twins.

I didn't develop these chops all on my own. I had some great mentors throughout my career who have given me the tool kit I have today, and these include coaches: Don Cooper (Chicago White Sox), Tom House (Texas Rangers) and Rich Hofman(Alex Rodriguez' High School Coach. I was fortunate enough to have my pitching prowess acknowledged with the following awards: Coach of the Year, Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel(1994, 1995, 1998); Coach of The Year, Miami Herald(1994-1998); and I enjoyed four Final Four appearances and own two state championships (1999, 2000). But enough about me, let's focus on you!

Let's play ball!

# Chapter I: SITTING DRILLS

## 1st Drill: **Sitting Wrist Drill**

The sitting wrist drill helps a player develop his release of the pitch from his finger tips and the back of his hand facing the sky. It also allows the pitcher to follow through after release and have his pitching fingers pointed to the ground. Here are the steps:

- 1** **The player** starts by sitting on his pivot foot knee and extends his stride foot out to face his throwing partner. His stride leg should form a 90-degree angle.
- 2** **The pitcher** will hold his throwing wrist with his non-throwing hand and hold the baseball out with his fingertips.
- 3** **The player** holds his elbow at shoulder height with his throwing hand out in front of his face.
- 4** **The pitcher**, using a wrist-to-finger momentum, snaps the ball to his partner.



**Keys to this drill:** The baseball comes off the pitcher's fingers with back spin. The back of the hand should face upwards to the sky at release. At the end of the rep, the fingers should now face the ground.

## 2nd Drill: Sitting Wrist & Forearm Drill

The sitting wrist and forearm drill helps a player develop the same skills as the sitting wrist drill but adds the pitcher's forearm to the equation.

- 1** Set-up for this drill is the same as in the sitting wrist drill.
- 2 NEW:** Hold the throwing elbow with the non-throwing hand. In this drill we incorporate both the wrist and forearm, unlike the sitting wrist drill.
- 3** The wrist and forearm should be in a 90-degree angle to the throwing shoulder.
- 4** The pitcher extends his forearm and snaps his wrist and fingers to complete the rep.
- 5** The pitcher's fingers should now face the ground.



**Keys to this drill:** There should be a good extension with the forearm and the back of the hand facing skywards at release of the ball. The fingers will face the ground upon completion.

## 3rd Drill: **Sitting Width Drill**

The sitting width drill helps a player develop his arm circle by breaking his hands over his thigh and getting both arms to shoulder height to initiate the pitch. It also helps the pitcher to initiate his exchange and focus on the core muscles, lead arm and Ferris Wheel action of the throwing arm.

- 1** The pitcher sits on both knees a few inches apart.
- 2** He should hold the baseball in the web of his glove — with the palm of his glove turned toward his face, below his eyes.
- 3** The pitcher's elbows will form a triangle in front of his chest.
- 4** The pitcher should now pull both hands down simultaneously while breaking his thumbs down and away from each other over the pivot thigh, and then form circles with each arm.
- 5** The top of the throwing hand's wrist should lead the elbow to shoulder height with the back of the hand facing up to the sky, the fingertips relaxed and ready to throw.
- 6** The gloved hand should circle up and over the pivot thigh with the gloved hand's elbow pointing at the target.



**7** The gloved hand's forearm should create a 90-degree angle to the pointed elbow, then the pitcher's gloved hand "snaps a picture" with the palm of the glove behind him.

**8** The pitcher then initiates the toss to his partner by executing the exchange. This is done by pulling the glove side elbow down toward the pitcher's front hip and turning the glove side fingers up halfway through this action. The pitcher's palm and fingers of his gloved hand will be facing his glove side pectoral muscle when completing this front-side exchange.



**9** When the pitcher pulls his elbow down, he simultaneously pops his throwing fingers up — while keeping his thumb under his hand — to begin the exchange.



**10** The right shoulder should roll in front of his chest while the throwing hand is out in front of his face to release the ball. The pitcher's chin should be down when performing this action.

**11** The ball is then released, incorporating the prior wrist and forearm drills actions.

**12** The pitcher's chin should finish down on the throwing shoulder.

**Keys to this drill:** Practice breaking thumbs down and away over the pivot thigh while keeping the chin down as it rotates from the front to the back shoulder during the entire drill.

## 4th Drill: **Sitting Length Drill**

The sitting length drill helps a player develop his release and follow through.

- 1** The pitcher should sit on his pivot foot knee with his stride leg out toward [the pitcher? The player? The batter? The catcher?] with his stride heel in a straight line back to his knee.
- 2** The stride foot toe should be turned 30 degrees to his throwing side.
- 3** The pitcher's front hip and shoulder should be pointed at the target.
- 4** The pitcher's chin should be down on his front shoulder, elbows forming a triangle in front of his chest.
- 5** The throwing hand is in the palm of the glove with the ball in the web.
- 6** The glove is facing the pitcher's chest.
- 7** The drill initiates when the pitcher pulls his thumbs over his pivot thigh and begins his arm circles.
- 8** With the elbows at shoulder height and the hands in proper position, the exchange begins when the pitcher engages his core muscles to open his chest.



- 9 The front elbow should come down to the hip and the throwing shoulder rolls over in front of his chest with the throwing hand in front of his face.
- 10 The ball is released as previously discussed in drills one, two, and three.
- 11 At the completion of the drill, the pitcher's chin should be down on his front shoulder, his chest over his stride leg thigh, and his eyes out over his stride toe.

**Keys to this drill:** Make sure you are shoulder-width apart with your setup. The pitcher should be lined up straight. It is important to really emphasize focusing on the proper exchange with this drill. Pay close attention to all the details of the exchange as previously mentioned.

# Chapter II:

# STANDING DRILLS

## 5th Drill: Standing Width Drill

The standing width drill helps a player develop his hand break, arm circles, exchange and finish.

- 1 The player stands shoulder width apart facing his partner about ten feet away.
- 2 The player is in an athletic position.
- 3 He keeps his hands in front of his face just below eye level.
- 4 His elbows form a triangle in front of his chest.
- 5 The player initiates the toss by breaking his thumbs over his pivot foot thigh and circling up to shoulder height with his hands and elbows.
- 6 Coaching tip: the top of the throwing wrist should lead the way to shoulder height and the fingers should be pointed to the ground.



**7** Once in this T position, the player pitches the ball to his partner by engaging his core and bringing his glove side elbow down to his front hip, and rolling his thumb behind his throwing hand.



**8** The pitcher continues the exchange by rolling his throwing shoulder in front of his chest and his throwing hand in front of his face.



**9** When he releases the ball, the back of his hand should be facing the sky.

**10** After releasing the ball, his throwing fingers should be pointed down to the ground and his hand finishes across his stride leg with his throwing shoulder pointed at the target.



**Keys to this drill:** The player focuses on the web of his partner's glove with his eyes. Partners should give different targets. Four of the pitcher's six sights are involved in this drill: His elbow or glove hand, his eyes, the throwing hand, and throwing shoulder. The purpose of the drill is to eliminate the lower half and feel his upper body go through the proper progressions.

## 6th Drill: Standing Length Drill

The standing length drill helps a player develop his pitching motion and finish without striding with his legs. The pitcher takes on an athletic stance — shoulder-width apart — facing his throwing partner.

- 1 The pitcher's front hip and shoulder are facing his partner.
- 2 The pitcher's hands are in the middle of his body with the palm of his glove facing his chest and his throwing hand in the web of his glove.
- 3 His elbows form a triangle back to the pitcher's chest.
- 4 The pitcher's head is centered over his belly button and moves inside his back leg when he breaks his hands down and circles up to make the toss.
- 5 All of the same techniques apply as previously stated in drill # 5.
- 6 To initiate the toss, the pitcher pushes his weight back to his belly button, using his pivot foot to initiate the movement.



**7** Once his weight and head are over his belly button, the exchange is made as previously stated.

**8** The mechanical progression is as follows:

**a** hand out in front of the face releasing the ball

**b** chest down over the stride thigh

**c** eyes focused out over the stride toe.



**Keys to this drill:** Land with the front toe at a 30-degree angle to your throwing side. Focus on the exchange. Make sure both arms are working together in time and sequence. Make sure you start the exchange with the core muscles. Keep the chin down on the front shoulder and make sure it is down on the back shoulder when finishing the toss.

# 7th Drill: Load-up- in-Four Drill

The load-up-in-four drill helps a player develop his tempo and pitching motion to home plate.

- 1** The player starts by gathering all of his weight over the rubber and making his way to home plate to deliver the ball.
- 2** The stride leg should lift with the knee moving back toward center field. The stride foot toe should be relaxed and pointed at the ground.
- 3** In this balanced position with the front hip and shoulder facing the target, the chin should be down over the front shoulder with hands facing the chest — in front of the back pectoral muscle.
- 4** The elbows should now form a triangle facing the pitcher's chest.
- 5** Ease into the pitching motion by breaking the thumbs down inside the pitcher's thighs while coming straight down with the stride leg — forming the top of an L-Shape.
- 6** Simultaneously form the bottom of an L-Shape with the stride leg and circle the arms up to shoulder height.



- 7 **IMPORTANT:** As the stride leg moves out toward the target, sink slightly on the core to place weight on the lower half and deliver the ball to home plate.(This is similar to sitting on a breakfast stool).
- 8 When this move is done properly, the pitcher should feel weight on the inside of his pivot foot, which he should use to push his body forward to make the pitch.
- 9 As the stride foot touches down, the pitcher should make an exchange by initiating with his core and bringing his stride arm down to his hip which creates a circling motion. This action will create a circling motion with the pitchers throwing motion resulting in his shoulder in front of his chest and his hand out in front of his face.
- 10 This action is created by pulling with the core and closing the under portion of the front side elbow and forearm down to the front hip.
- 11 The front side shoulder should be tilting slightly downward.
- 12 It is from this position that the ball is released.
- 13 Once released, the back of the pitcher's hand should face the sky, with the throwing fingers facing the ground after releasing the ball and the throwing shoulder pointed at the target.

**Keys to this drill:** The pitcher should create a balanced position to deliver the ball. Momentum is gained by forming an aggressive L-Shape with the stride leg and smooth C's with the arms.

**Important:** Remember to glide smoothly toward the target when pushing weight forward off the inside of the pivot foot. Also remember to sink or utilize your core when you are getting out — not when you are over the rubber. Always avoid jumping to your front side.

## 8th Drill: Chair Drill

The chair drill helps a player develop his stride leg approach to home plate and weight shift to his front leg.

- 1** Start this drill with a folding chair opened, the front seat facing the pitcher.
- 2** The pitcher should place his stride leg toe on the front of the back portion of the seat of the chair.
- 3** Initiate this step by taking the stride knee back toward center field and taking his foot off the chair.
- 4** Now create the L-Shape with the stride leg and C's with the arms and hands.
- 5** The pitcher should glide in front of the chair with his stride leg as he sinks on his core while pushing his weight forward from inside the pivot foot.
- 6** Immediately after pushing his weight forward with his pivot foot, he kicks over the front seat of the chair (with pivot foot) and lands even with his stride leg foot.

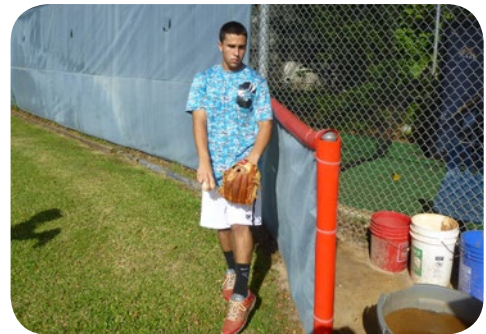


**Keys to this drill:** The purpose of this drill is to get a nice, high kick with our pivot foot. As we push our weight forward with our pivot foot, picture kicking the first baseman if you are a lefty in the head with our heel or the third baseman if you are a righty. Another tip is to turn the pivot foot knee in toward the stride leg knee when kicking out the heel.

# 9th Drill: Balance & Break Drill

The balance and break drill helps a player develop his stride leg and hands working together.

- 1** The pitcher should stand about five inches away from the fence, facing it with his front side hip and shoulder.
- 2** Load up in four and practice forming the top of an L-Shape without touching the ground, while breaking the hands and thumbs down inside the thighs — without falling forward into the fence.
- 3** Practicing this drill helps keep our body weight over the rubber for the pitcher's balance point.
- 4** Do ten reps each drill season.



**Keys to this drill:** This is an outstanding drill for preventing a pitcher from coming out too early. When done properly, the pitcher should gain a key sense of balance which will give him confidence to deliver properly during games. Ensure the pitcher holds the balance position for a few seconds between each rep.

# Chapter III:

# FENCE DRILLS

## 10th Drill: Clock Drill

The clock drill helps a player develop his ability to be equal and opposite with throwing arm and stride arm.

- 1** The pitcher should stand in front of a pole on a fence, shoulder-width apart, with his throwing side hip facing the pole.
- 2** Now the pitcher should break his hands and thumb over his pivot foot thigh as he rolls his hand up to a T-position and touch the part of the clock that makes him equal and opposite to his natural break.
- 3** The poll should be at the 12:00 position.
- 4** If his throwing hand breaks at 6:00, his glove should touch at 12:00.
- 5** If he breaks at 7:00, his glove side elbow should touch at the 1:00 position (equal and opposite).
- 6** The pitcher then makes his exchange and replaces his gloved hand with his throwing hand on the fence.



- 7** The pitcher then pauses in this position and finishes his rep by coming down across his stride leg with his throwing fingers.
- 8** You can determine the pitcher's natural break by standing behind him while he goes through his motion. His break on the clock comes from his hand position as he clears his throwing side thigh.
- 9** For a right-handed player, it will be 6, 7, 8, or 9:00.
- 10** A left-handed player will be 6, 5, 4, or 3:00.
- 11** The elbow will roll up and point to the corresponding opposite on the clock on the fence.
- 12** The hands are then exchanged to complete the rep.
- 13** Seven to ten reps are recommended for this drill.



**Keys to this drill:** (TBU)

# 11th Drill: Kick up on the Fence Drill

The kick up on the fence drill helps a player develop his tempo and balanced finish.

- 1** The final drill in the fence package is the kick up on the fence drill.
- 2** This drill starts by standing parallel to a fence about one-half of a foot away.
- 3** Out of the stretch position, the pitcher goes through his pitching motion and after pushing to his front side with his pivot foot, he kicks his pivot foot up on the fence and holds that balanced position a few seconds for each rep.
- 4** It is important for the pitcher to remember to sink on his core when sweeping his stride leg out. This puts the proper weight on his lower half to achieve the desired hip explosion.



**Keys to this drill:** This drill incorporates all aspects of the throwing motion, with emphasis on balancing the weight on the stride leg. Through this drill, the pitcher will focus on releasing the ball with his hand, bringing his chest down to his thigh, and his eyes over his stride toe. After the exchange, the gloved hand is held in front of the chest for maximum balance. The chest should be down on the stride length thigh with the glove in front of the chest.

# 12th Drill: T-Drill

The T-drill helps a player develop his full pitching motion in the windup, slow stretch, and slide step.

- 1** The pitcher should stand on the mound and place his pivot foot against the front of the rubber as if he is going to throw out of the stretch.
- 2** He then counts five-and-a-half steps going toward home plate (\*the size of each step should be his own).
- 3** This is accomplished simply by putting one foot in front of the other.
- 4** He initiates the mark off by placing his stride foot heel against the middle of his pivot foot.
- 5** He then begins his mark off — placing one foot in front of the other.
- 6** When he reaches the end of five-and-a-half steps, he makes a horizontal distance line to mark the spot.
- 7** Next, the pitcher goes back to the rubber with his back facing home plate, marking a directional line straight to the distance line.
- 8** This is the practice T.



**9** The pitcher's goal is to land where the two lines meet when performing the motion drills of his three windups.

**10** **Recommended:** five reps with the slow stretch, slide step, and wind-up should be sufficient to keep the quality and focus strong each drill season.



**Keys to this drill:** The coach can determine if the pitcher is opening too soon, or throwing across his body by observing where he lands on the T. The optimum landing point is where the two lines meet. If the landing point is more than a couple of inches to either side, the pitcher has to work on his ride to the plate. Leading with the stride foot heel and side of the front foot and placing the foot at a thirty-degree angle at strike down will solve a majority of the opening-too-early and throwing-across-the-body problems.



# 13th Drill: Towel Drill

The towel drill helps a player develop his pitching motion and extension of his throwing arm to deliver the ball.

- 1** The pitcher places a folding chair facing him on the rubber at a point beyond his five-and-a-half mark, where he can extend his hand and slap the seat of the chair with a towel held in his throwing hand.
- 2** The pitcher's goal is to get as much extension as he can.
- 3** The closer we get to home plate at pitch release, the less reaction time the batter has to the pitch.
- 4** The pitcher goes through his complete pitching motion when doing towel drills.
- 5** The goal is to simulate game tempo and release when striding to and striking the chair.
- 6** The pitcher will do five reps of each wind-up (slow stretch, slide step, wind-up).



**Keys to this drill:** Pitcher can use a small towel or his baseball cap to hit the front seat of the chair in this drill.

**Those are our baker's dozen drill package. When done diligently, a pitcher will see huge improvement in all aspects of his pitching**

# Conclusion:

To become successful in any sport that requires repetition of technique under pressure, you have to have a system in place that enables you to isolate and practice all the mechanics of that particular skill. The baker's dozen drill package on pitching that you received in this eBook is the perfect vehicle to develop command and consistency in becoming a successful pitcher. When a serious-minded pitcher incorporates this drill package in his pursuit of excellence, success will be inevitable. The confidence and positive self-esteem that will come as a result of utilizing this drill package is invaluable.

I have been coaching for over 30 years and have seen many aspiring young pitchers become successful in high school, get college scholarships and some professional contracts. Matt Latos, Luke Jackson, Touki Toussaint all became first round draft picks. All three of these pitchers committed to the drill package presented in this eBook and became millionaires. What is your potential? Will it be a great high school career, college scholarship, or a pro contract? Take the first step and commit to the drills.